

First Impressions

Wilmore, KS

K-State Research and Extension



- Wilmore asked for First Impressions. Volunteer visitors from Wilmore, Barber, and Kingman counties were trained on what to look for and how to fill out their report.
- Visitors visited in April of 2024 and photos of the community were taken in July.
- Results presented 4/23/2025.
- Wilmore uses the results for further discussion and action plans.

Why: First Impressions?

- **Feedback:**

How does a first-time visitor view my town?

- Evaluate successes,
- Set goals and priorities for next steps.

- **If you don't agree with the observation:**

- *Be curious*, Why does the visitor see it this way?
- Is the observation worth considering?
- What can we do to change it– or the perception?

Curiosity: A strong desire to know or learn something.

-Oxford Living Dictionary

Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN

We need to change the narrative about rural.

- Rural is *changing*, not dying.
- Brain Gain (30-49 year olds moving to rural) is a “new trend” that has been happening since the 70’s.
- People research a number of places before they move to a rural town.
- Rural is in the middle of ***everywhere***. You live one place, work another and play another. With transportation and internet, it’s all accessible to you.

Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, U of MN

- In a survey of newcomers to rural areas, the reasons they come are:
 - Simpler pace of life,
 - Safety and security,
 - Affordable housing,
 - Outdoor recreation,
 - Quality schools
 - ***“A job”*** *isn't in the top 10 reasons.*
- Communities can work together to attract newcomers and create quality of life for everyone.

- “In small towns everyone knows each other.” *false*
- *Get to know each other*, invite them to a newcomers’ meal.
- If you bring 7 people to a 700-citizen town every year in 10 years, you’ll have a 10% increase. It matters! It is a challenge with housing, but it is achievable.
- We are our own worst enemies. We have to monitor our customer service and what we say. It matters.
- Don’t say, “You have to live here twenty years to be an insider.” And don’t act like it either.

- 75% of rural homeowners are Baby Boomers and older. 30% are over 75.
- Housing will be freed up as the baby boomers retire and move closer to medical services.
- Rural communities need retirement housing (not nursing facilities, but maintenance free) to retain seniors.- *Ben Winchester, Senior Research Fellow, University of Minnesota*



*Ben Winchester was our guest on the
First Friday Call.*

See the recording at:

<https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/business/entrepreneurship/>

- 2023 KS Certified Population: 37 ↓ 5% since 2010
- 2020 U.S. Census: 37
- 2010 U.S. Census: 39
- Median household income: \$ 62,083 **\$68,925**
- High school or GED 95.7% **91.6%**
- At least a B.S. Degree No Data **34.4%**
- Median Age: 47 years **37.6 years**
- Persons 65 and Over 21% **17.2%**

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

- Moved since Last Year
(2022/23):

No Data 14.6%

- Poverty rate
(% of people below poverty line)

24.2% 12%

Race/Ethnicity

White: 97%

Black: 0%

Asian: 0%

Other: 0%

Not Hispanic or Latino:
100%

American Indian: 0%

Native Hawaiian/Other

Pacific Islander: 0%

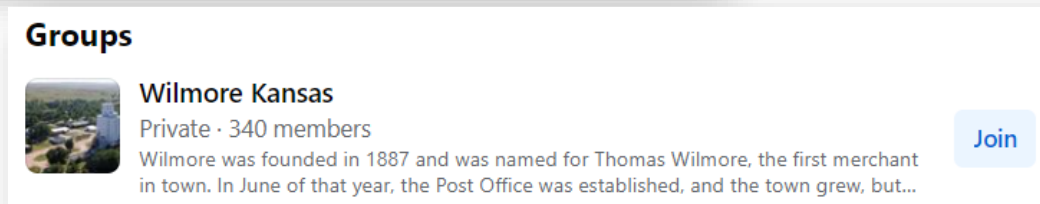
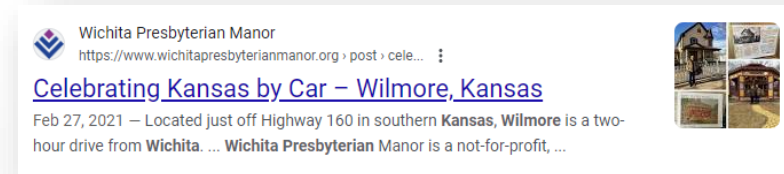
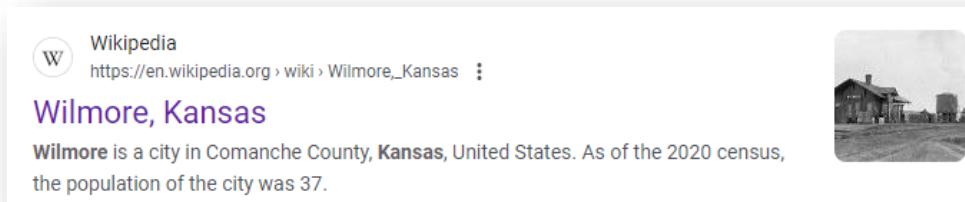
Two or more races: 3%

Hispanic or Latino:
0%

Blue: Kansas Comparison Data

(Source: MySidewalk.com; Census.gov)

- Some visitors mentioned there was very limited information online about Wilmore.
- Another mentioned they found a great article on onlyinyourstate.com, a Wikipedia entry, a private Facebook group, and an article by Wichita Presbyterian Manor.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Visitors felt Wilmore was a nice little Kansas town.
- The houses were well maintained.
- They loved the barn quilt road signs. The barn quilts all over town gave a cohesive look.
- Quiet, welcoming community.



“Five-Minute” Impression

- Other than the green highway signs, no other signage noted by some.
- Others did note welcome signage.



Downtown Business Area

- Entering from the northwest, the businesses were not well marked.
- Visitors saw a library, post office, volunteer fire department, church, and community center when they first started to explore this area.



Downtown Business Area

- They also found a propane company and a co-op, but there were questions on whether the co-op was open.
- The carousel was mentioned – the doors were open, it was very inviting to stop and ride.
- Visitors also found the Comanche Pit Stop. They didn't see an “open” sign but did note several vehicles out front.



Downtown Business Area

- The carousel did not charge and had great customer service! The operator visited with us and told us about how the carousel came to Wilmore.



Public Amenities Downtown

- Some felt there were no amenities downtown.
- Others felt the Centennial Park was close enough to count and noted the park's amenities – basketball and baseball facilities, picnic area.



- This part of town was very nicely mowed. The public park was clean, mowed, and well maintained.
- Parking was mostly streetside.
- Most spaces in town were well taken care of.



Other Retail Shopping Areas

- Visitors did see a small building with the Haviland Telephone Company sign and felt there would be phone service in town, but unsure if there was wi-fi/internet.



havilantelco.com

<http://havilantelco.com> › directory › city=Wilmore ⋮

[Wilmore Directory - Haviland Broadband](#)

- *A drive-by is not how industry will find you, check with your local Eco Devo director to make sure your site is listed on LocationOne @ Kansas Department of Commerce.*

Observation:

- “Entrepreneurs who choose to start their small businesses are responsible for 63 percent of net new jobs created in the United States every year.”
- *Global marketing makes your town accessible to purchases all over the world.*

- No specific area was marked as industrial or commercial.

- Visitors felt that maybe some emergency services could be provided by the volunteer fire department. Otherwise, no healthcare or long-term care services appear to exist.



- One house was noted to be for sale at the time of the visits.
- The housing was single family, no multi-family housing options noticed.
- Visitors felt the housing stock had mixed levels of maintenance.
- The city is landlocked by farmland, so there may be limited access if someone wanted to build.
- No rental properties were seen.



- Occupied Housing Units: 15 **Kansas**
1.15m
- Owner Occupied: 80% 65.3%
- Renter Occupied: 20% 34.7%
- Vacant Housing Units 15 124k
 - For rent: 0
 - For sale: 9
 - Sold, not occupied:
 - Seasonal/recreational: 4
 - All other vacants: 2
- Average Household Size: 2 2.48

Blue = Kansas Comparison Data

Data Source: Census.gov; MySidewalk.com

Kansas

- Average Travel Time to Work: 14 mins 19.6 mins
- Households without a computer*: (0%) 45k (3.8%)
- Households without an internet subscription: (0%) 108k (9.2%)

* Includes smartphones, tablets, other wireless devices

- Kansas Housing Corporation is a resource to find out about housing grants and other tools for homeowners and renters.
- Also has some resources to address homelessness.

<https://kshousingcorp.org/>



- The former school building has been removed. The old bus barn is still in use by a private individual from appearances.
- No school facilities exist in the community.
- No information was found online about the quality of the education system that serves the area.

Comments:

No childcare services were observed in town.

Comanche County Data:

- **Extent Desired Capacity meets Potential Childcare need** **34%**
- Contact ks.childcareaware.org to access local childcare specialists.
785-823-3343

Source <https://ks.childcareaware.org/data-research/> Retrieved from internet 8/22/24

- The Wilmore Federated Church was identified.
- The church was beautiful!
- There was someone doing upkeep around the building during the visit.



- Nothing observed by most.
- Perhaps the library or volunteer fire department would fit this description.



- Sidewalks were limited.
- Visitors noticed no lighting or public restrooms.



- No city hall was noticed.

Fire, EMS and Police Services

- The fire department building was very well maintained and seems to be large for the number of people in town.



Welcome to Kansas Insurance Department

Home Contact Us

Kansas Insurance Commissioner Vicki Schmidt

Kansas Insurance Department
420 SW 9th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1678
Consumer Hotline: 800-432-2484 (KS only)
[Email Us](#) | Phone: 785-296-3071



- > The Department
- > Auto/Home
- > Health/Life
- > Insurance Fraud & Education
- > Producer/Agency Services
- > Company Services
- > Other Services



HOME : ISO

ISO Public Protection Classification

Most U.S. insurers of home and business properties use Insurance Services Office's (ISO) Property Protection Classification (PPC) in calculating premiums. In general, the price of insurance in a community with a good PPC is lower than in a community with a poor PPC, assuming all other factors are equal.

PPC Program: <https://www.isomitigation.com/program-works/how-the-ppc-program-works.html>

A community's PPC depends on:

1. Emergency communications systems, including facilities for the public to report fires, staffing, training, certification of telecommunicators, and facilities for dispatching fire departments
2. The fire department, including equipment, staffing, training, and geographic deployment of fire companies
3. The water supply system, including the inspection and flow testing of hydrants and a careful evaluation of

- The library wasn't open during the visits.
- It's a small library but has good signage pointing the way to the building.



- The park with baseball field looked like a fun place to play.
- Visitors noted the tables under the structure in the park.
- Looks to be activities for all ages.



Well-Known for an attraction or event?

- The carousel! This is a fantastic addition to the town! The owner was wonderful, all you have to do is knock on the door and you can have a ride.
- Visitors got stickers that said “I visited the Wilmore Carousel!”



Natural or manmade features that can draw people?

- The carousel would be something to draw people to town.
- The quilt patterned signage.



What would bring you back?

- The carousel.

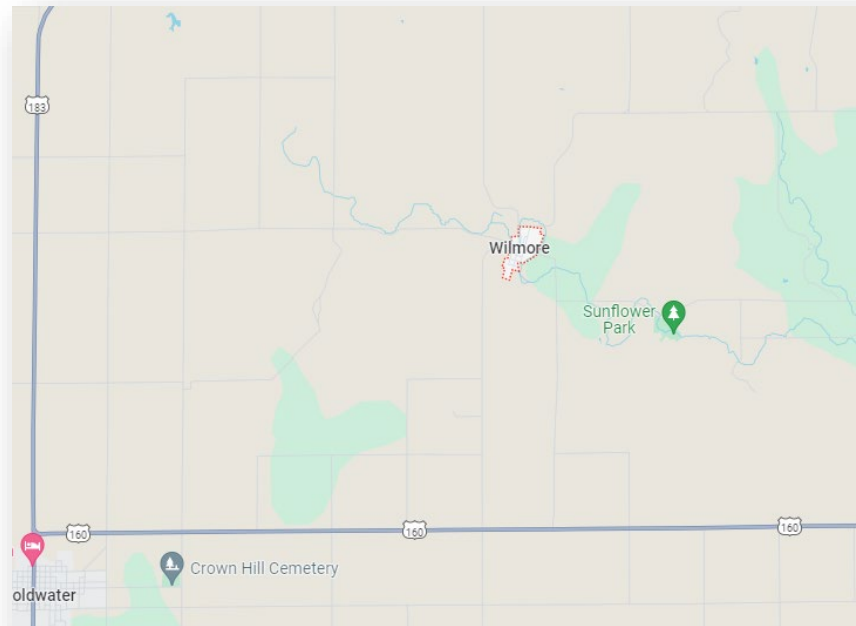


Most Positive Observations

- The friendly people.
- The carousel.
- The community is very tidy with well maintained yards.
- The area that had the building removed was covered well with soil and packed level.
- Clean and quiet.

Biggest Obstacles/Challenges

- Residents must travel outside of town for everything. This prevents people from aging in place without significant support from family and friends.
- The location because of being secluded.



What will you remember?

- The carousel. I would like to go back with my family for them to experience it.
- Watching my son ride the carousel with other visitors. He loved the horses, sleigh and tub.
- Quiet and friendly town.

Thank you to our volunteer visitors.

Set Next Steps:

- Start talking! Find ways to discuss what you heard in small groups of every kind.

Contact us if you need resources or have questions:

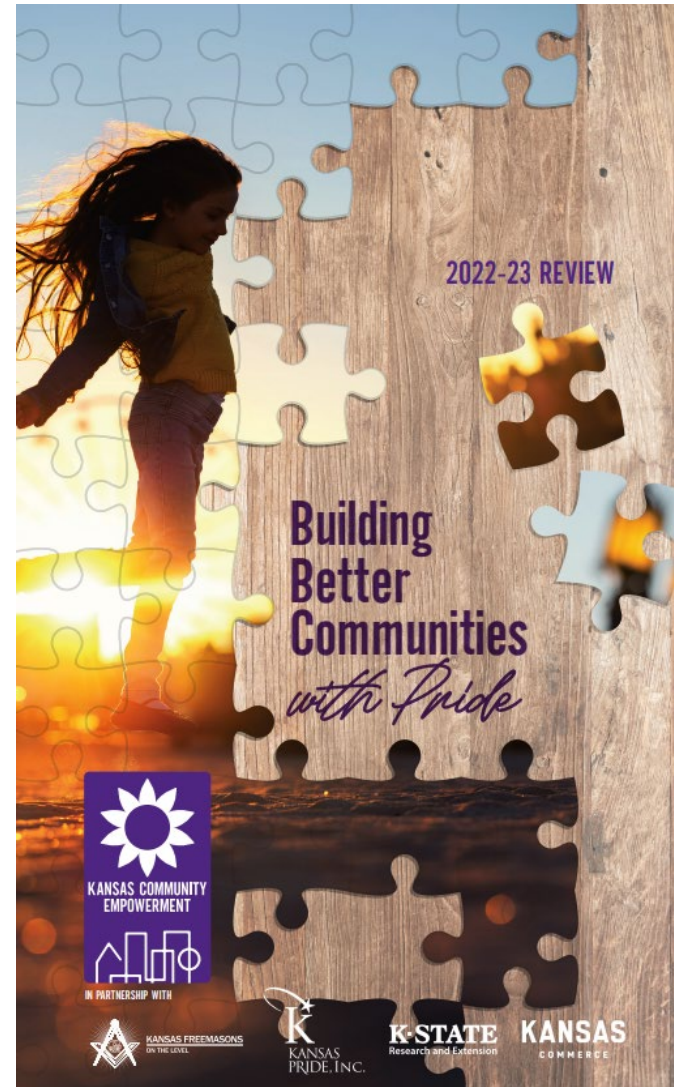
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Kansas Community Empowerment

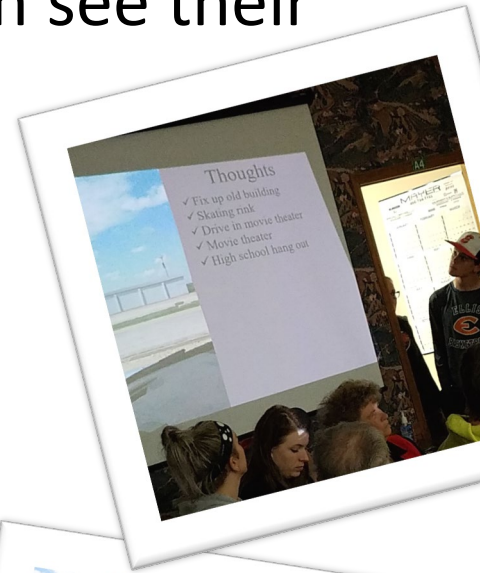
<http://kce.k-state.edu>

- Local communities identify what they would like to preserve, create, or improve for their future and volunteers pull together to create their ideal community future.



Youth Community Perceptions <https://bit.ly/ks-ycp>

- Youth-Based Community Assessment.
- Gives communities insights on how youth see their community.
- Creates opportunities for youth voices in the community.
- Allows youth to become involved in local government and community process



Grant Writing Classes and Support

Contact

KSRECV@ksu.edu

to participate.



5 GRANT WRITING RESOURCES

K-State Research and Extension provides resources to help you write and submit successful grant proposals to improve lives, livelihoods and communities across Kansas.

- 1 ONLINE GRANT WRITING CLASSES**
Class alum reported receiving more than \$52 million in successful grants. 
- 2 A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL GRANT DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT COURSE**
An 8-week course dedicated to helping you complete a fundable proposal. 
- 3 A LIST OF CONTRACT GRANT WRITERS**
Professionals willing and ready to write grants on a contract basis.
- 4 SUPPORT FOR KANSAS COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT COMMUNITIES**
Excellent resources for those wanting to bring more to their communities.
- 5 ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT BY K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS**
Our professionals are prepared to help you find grants and review your grant proposals.

Small Business and Community Development

- **First Friday e-Calls 9:30-10:30 am**

Connecting small businesses and communities with the resources to make them successful.

– Register here: <https://ksre-learn.com/ecall>

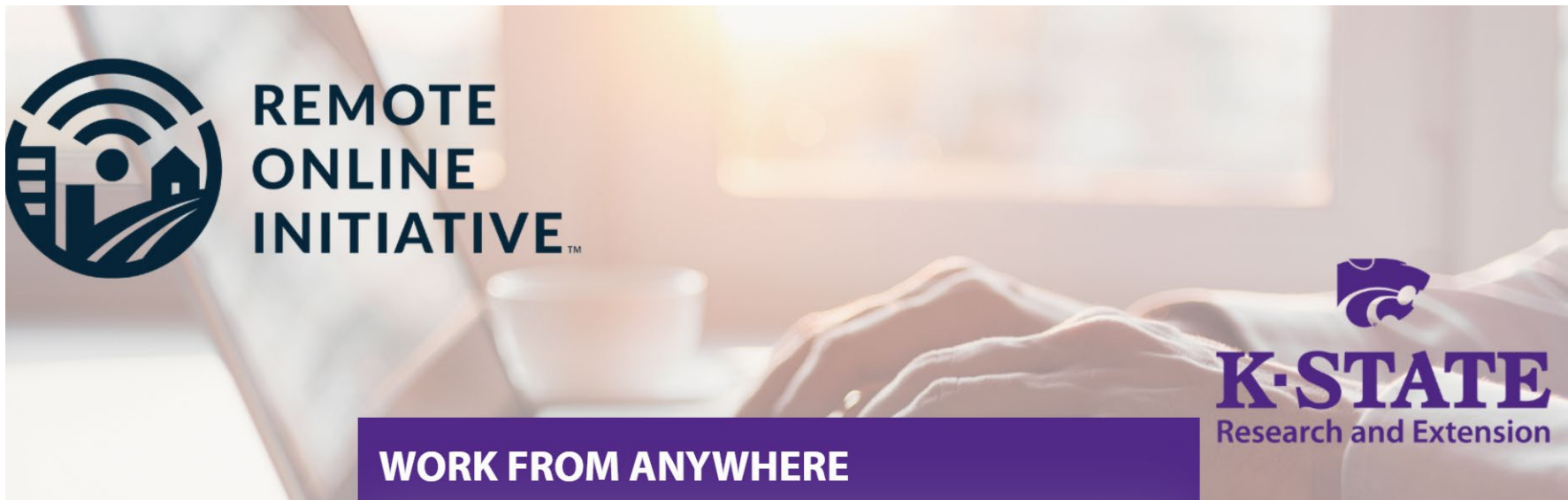
– Previous calls are recorded at

<https://ksre-learn.com/entrepreneurship>

- Now people have a choice, and millions of them are planning to move.
- **“The pivot to remote work is the biggest, fastest transformation of the labor market since the World War II mobilization.”**
- **Major cities will see the biggest out-migration:** 20.6% of those planning to move are currently based in a major city.
- **People are seeking less expensive housing:** Altogether, **more than half** (52.5%) are planning to move to a house that is significantly more affordable than their current home.
- **People are moving beyond regular commute distances:** 54.7% of people are moving over two hours away or more from their current location, which is beyond daily or even weekly commuting distances for most.

UpWork October, 2020 <https://www.upwork.com/press/releases/economist-report-remote-workers-on-the-move>, retrieved from Internet 12-12-20, UpWork October, 2020

- Kansas Remote Online Initiative
 - Certified Remote Work Professional
 - Certified Remote Work Leader
- *Certification in 4-weeks*
- Monthly Classes: <https://kansasremotework.com/>



Rural Grocery/KS Healthy Food Initiative

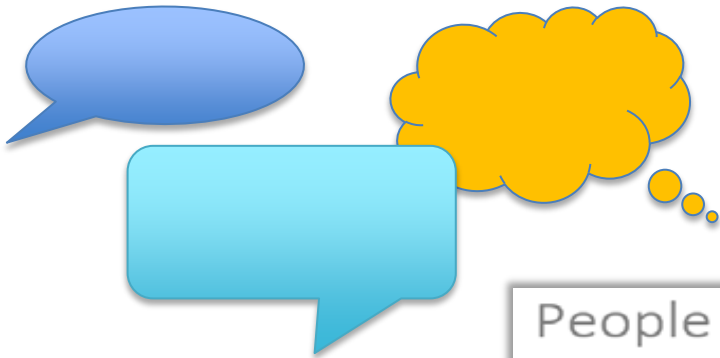
- **Goal:** Increase access to affordable, healthy food and to improve the health and economic development of Kansans and their communities.
- Technical assistance and financing to develop new or renovate fresh food retail in underserved communities throughout Kansas.

<http://kansashealthyfood.org/>



What will we do?

What did you hear?



What will we do?



People move in the direction of their conversations

